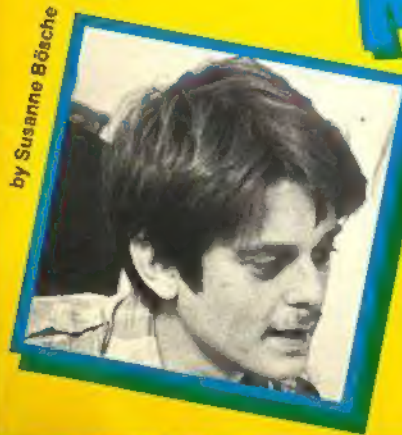




with photos by Andreas Hansen

# Jenny lives with Eric and Martin



by Susanne Bösch



**Jenny  
lives  
with**

**and Eric  
Martin**

translated from the Danish by Louis Mackay

by Susanne Bösche



with photos by Andreas Hansen





This is Jenny. She is five years old.



This is Jenny's dad. He is called Martin.

This is Eric. He lives with Jenny's dad.



Jenny, Martin and Eric live  
in a little house, in  
Denmark.



Living nearby is Jenny's  
mum, Karen. She often  
comes to visit them.







## It is Eric's birthday

It is usually Martin who collects Jenny from school, because he is the first to come home from work.

Today he collects Jenny earlier than usual. It is Eric's birthday and they are going to hurry home so they can surprise him with a birthday spread. Jenny's mum is coming too and Eric does not know anything about it – perhaps he thinks they have completely forgotten his birthday.

On the way home, Jenny and Martin buy some biscuits, a cake and some cream so they can make a proper birthday cake.

When they finally get home, they have a lot to do. It is late and everything must be ready when Eric comes.

Jenny helps to whip the cream and she decorates the cake with cherries and little flags. Then she runs off to wash her hands and put on her best clothes.







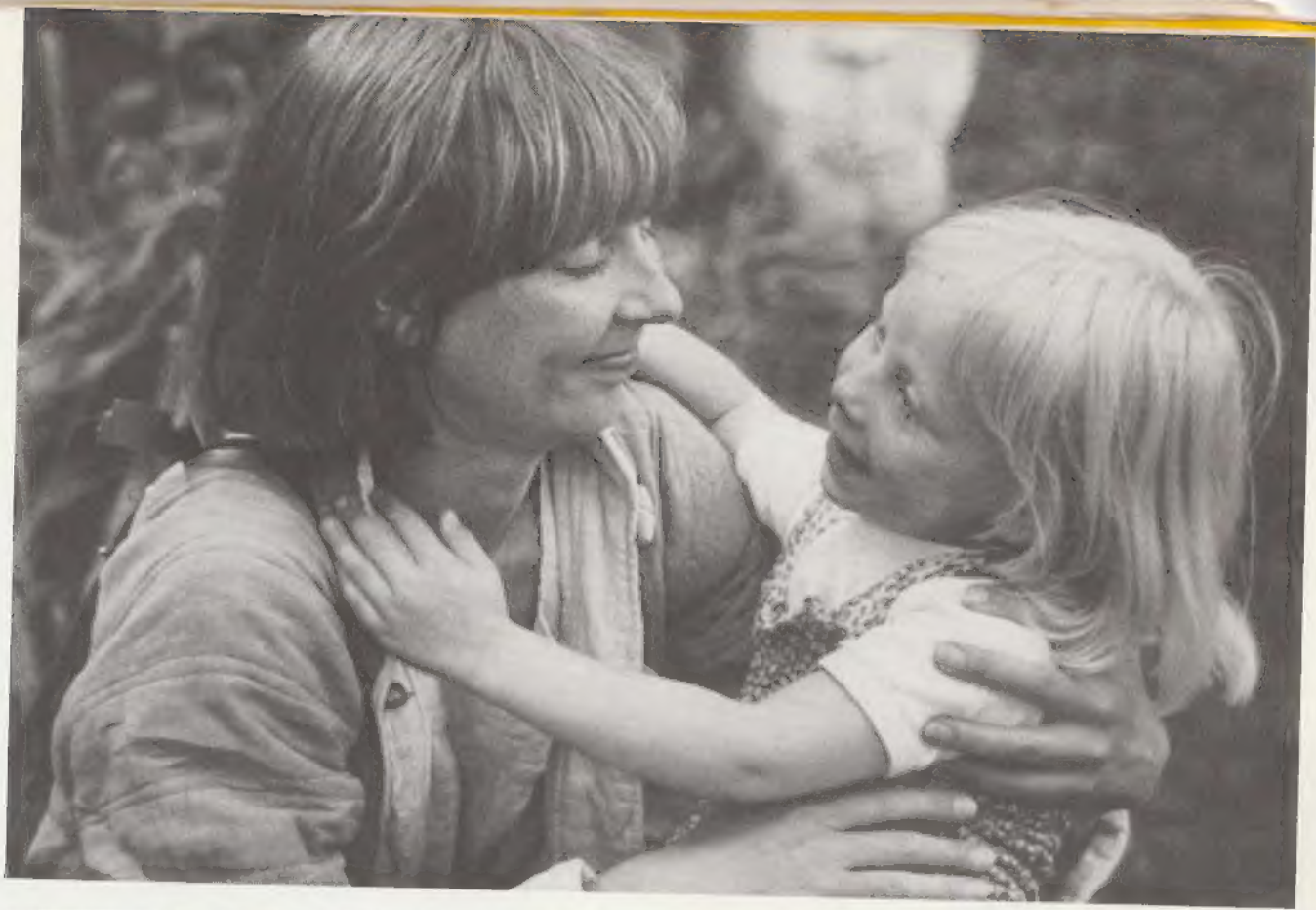
They lay the table out in the garden. Martin cuts some flowers from the big lilac bush and puts them in a vase in the middle of the table. They have just finished when Karen arrives.

Jenny gives her a hug and a great big kiss. "Have you brought a present for Eric?" Jenny asks.

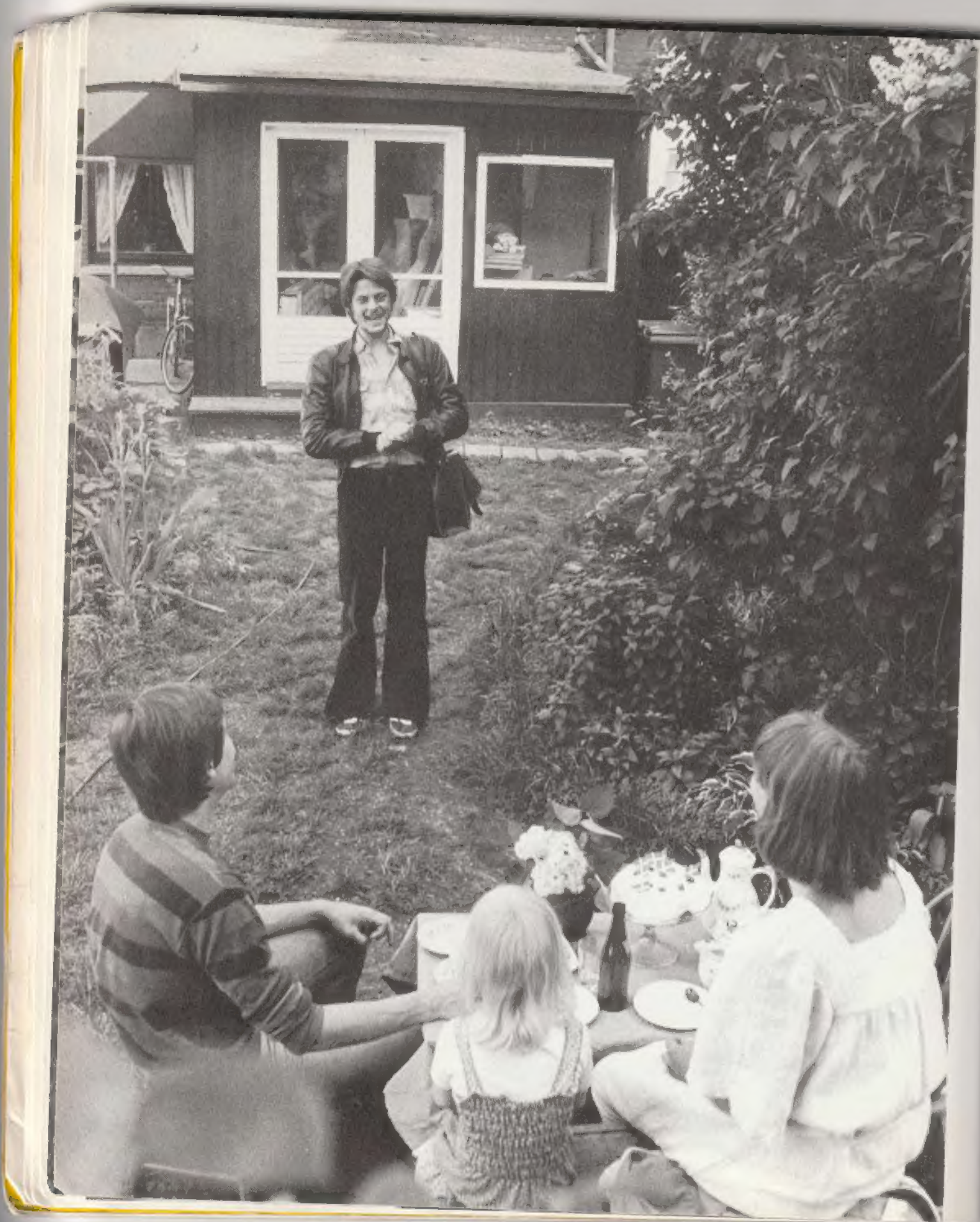
"Yes," says Karen, "I have brought him a book. The trouble is, I did not have any nice paper, so I had to wrap it in a newspaper."

"Never mind," says Jenny. "I think the ribbon is lovely."













They sit down at the table and wait, keeping absolutely quiet, so Eric won't know they are there as soon as he comes. After a little while they can hear him rummaging around in the house.

"He can't find us," whispers Jenny.

"Halloo-oo!" shouts Eric. "Anyone home?"

They stay as quiet as mice until they hear him coming out into the garden. Then they sing, "Happy Birthday to you . . ."

Eric is certainly surprised. He claps his hands. "Ooh! I didn't think anyone was home. And you have prepared a birthday party. How lovely!"

"Happy birthday! Happy birthday!" they all shout together. Then they give him kisses and presents.

Afterwards they drink cocoa and fizzy drinks and they eat cake and sing "Happy Birthday" once again.





The time passes much too quickly.  
Suddenly it is evening and Karen gets  
up and puts on her jacket.

"I must go now," she says.  
"Thanks for a lovely party."

"Oh, do you have to go so soon?"  
Jenny asks sadly.

Karen lifts her up and gives her a kiss.  
"I am free on Monday so I will come and  
fetch you. Bye for now."

"Oh, no . . ." says Jenny. "Why aren't  
you coming tomorrow?"

"I can't," says Karen. "I have got to  
work all day. Are you going to come out  
and wave to me?"

"Why don't we dig up a few potatoes  
for your mum to take home with her?"  
says Eric.

"That would be lovely," says Karen.  
"I didn't manage to do any shopping  
today."







Jenny helps Eric to dig up the potatoes. They are still quite small but they taste specially good like that, Eric says.

Soon they are standing on the steps and waving. Karen shouts, "See you on Monday," and Jenny isn't sad any more.







**It is Saturday**

Jenny opens her eyes.

Everything is quiet. She looks over to the curtains – yes, the sun is shining outside.



She tiptoes into the bedroom. Martin and Eric are still asleep. Martin is closest to her.

She tugs his arm gently, then harder.

"Dad! Dad! Wake up!"

He certainly is very sleepy. It looks as though he can't even open his eyes. He puts his arm around her and is about to say something, but he falls asleep again.





Jenny climbs up and prods him in the tummy. He yawns and sits up.

"What is the time? For goodness' sake, it is only seven! It is too early," he says. "Can't you find a book and read for a bit? I will make some breakfast in a while."

How tiresome he is, thinks Jenny. And she goes to get a book and her doll, Anne. It's a good thing Anne isn't such a sleepyhead.

"Dad, I've got a book now," says Jenny, settling herself with Anne.

"You are such a sweetie," Martin mumbles, snuggling up to Eric.

It is very cosy, sitting here on the warm bed. Jenny reads the whole book to her doll, Anne, but she can't remember exactly how it ends.





"I can't read any more," she says loudly, giving Martin a shove.

He mumbles something and turns over.

Grown-ups always sleep such a lot.

"I am hungry," Jenny whines miserably.

"Can't we have breakfast soon?"

"All right, all right," says Martin, sitting up and rubbing his eyes. "We will have breakfast then."

Eric stretches and yawns. "Oh good. It's Saturday."


Jenny and Martin go out to the kitchen to make breakfast. Martin makes some coffee and Jenny gets out the butter and plates and crispbread.

Soon they are sitting in bed with the breakfast tray. It is hard not to spill things because the whole bed goes up and down each time anyone moves. While Eric is putting sugar in his coffee, Jenny accidentally jogs him and most of the sugar ends up in the butter.

"We will have to eat sugar on crispbread," Eric laughs. "It is a long time since I tasted that."







After getting dressed, they go out into the garden. Eric takes his bike out of the shed, where it has been standing since it had a puncture last week. Jenny helps him turn it upside down, so it stands with its wheels in the air. One tyre feels soft when she squeezes it.

"That is because it is punctured," says Eric. "There is a hole in it and we are going to patch it - if we can find the hole."

"Don't you think we can?" asks Jenny.

"If I can't help you," says Martin, "I will mow the lawn."

"Yes, do," says Eric. "It needs it."



Eric pumps air into the inner tube and then holds it down in a bucket of water.

"The hole is so small, it is hard to see," he says.

He turns the inner tube so the water covers a new part, and now they can see a stream of small bubbles coming from a tiny little mark on the tube.

"Is that really a hole?" asks Jenny.

"See for yourself," says Eric, and he holds the tube up to her mouth. And now she can feel the jet of air coming out.

"Eric!" shouts Martin from the garden. "Are we going to eat early today?"

"Yes!" Eric shouts back. "I am hungry."

"I am too," says Jenny. "Are we going to have something hot?"

"Yes, we're going to have cauliflower cheese," says Eric, who is having trouble getting the tyre back on. "Why won't this silly tyre go on?"

"Are you going in to put the potatoes on?" shouts Martin.

"No," shouts Eric. "Ouch! My fingers! The screwdriver slipped." He sucks his finger which is bleeding slightly.





"Can't you just put the potatoes on?"  
Martin shouts again "Otherwise I'll  
never finish mowing the lawn."

Eric dries his hands on a rag, looking  
annoyed. He walks over to Martin  
"Now, look," he says angrily, "I did the  
cooking yesterday and the day before. It  
is your turn, so you will have to cut the  
grass afterwards."

And suddenly they are squabbling.  
They stand there, shouting all sorts of  
things at the tops of their voices.

Jenny scratches a bit of old paint off  
her trike. She feels she is about to cry.







"Why are you arguing?" she asks in a very small voice.

Suddenly there is silence. Eric lifts her up on his arm.

"You are right. It is silly arguing about who is going to cook."

"Yes," says Martin, "it really is. Why don't we draw lots? That would be much better."

Eric looks angrily at him. "You cheat!" But it's clear that he isn't really cross any more.

"So are you friends after all?" asks Jenny.

"You are a sly one," says Martin, laughing.

Jenny gets a great big kiss.

"We are not even allowed to get a tiny bit cross because of you."

"We do love each other – even if we argue sometimes," says Eric, looking at Martin.

Martin gives him a big kiss right on the mouth and Jenny gets one on the nose

"Jump down then, so we can draw lots."





Eric picks up a pebble from the ground and hides his hands behind his back. "If you pick the hand with the pebble in it, you do the cooking."

Martin picks the empty hand.

"Ha ha! So you do it after all," he laughs.

"Bah!" says Eric, trying to look annoyed, but he can't help grinning.

"Do you want to come in and help, Jenny?"

Jenny certainly does.





On the way up to the house, Eric turns round and sticks his tongue out at Martin.

"You should not do that!" says Jenny. "You are not supposed to stick your tongue out."

"Yes, you are right – I was only joking. But it was Martin's turn to cook today."

"But I am going to help you," says Jenny.





"Can I watch you shave, please?"  
Jenny asks. "Please? It looks so funny."  
"Okay," says Eric. "You can make  
sure I do it properly. But then you will  
have to be quick and a flash, getting it to  
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After they play lotto. It is Saturday evening after all, and on Saturdays Jenny is always allowed to stay up late. If they are not going out, she is also allowed to decide what they all do.

"My turn first," says Jenny.

"No, I am going first," says Eric, "then you."

"Okay," says Jenny. "Then it is Martin's turn after mine."

After a long time playing, Eric says it is time to stop. Then he reads a book instead.

Jenny is so sleepy she can hardly keep her eyes open until the end of the book. And she thinks it is nice being carried to bed and tucked up with her doll, Anne.





## It is Sunday

When Jenny wakes up and goes in to wake Eric and Martin, they get up right away.

"Are we going to have breakfast in bed today?" asks Jenny.

"No, not today," says Eric. "We are going to do the cleaning and go to the launderette, so we had better hurry up and get going."

After breakfast, Eric and Martin start doing the housework and getting the washing ready.





Jenny goes on crying for a while, as Martin and Eric drag her along with them. Then she stops crying and sulks instead.

"If you go on being so bad-tempered, you will have to put your shirt over your head at the launderette. Otherwise you will make everybody else bad-tempered."

"That would look very smart," says Eric, grinning.

"It isn't funny," says Jenny sourly, but she can't help smiling.



At the launderette, Jenny helps to get the powder from the slot machine and to load the clothes into the washing machines. It is fun doing that, but it is boring sitting and waiting for the machines to finish their washing.





"We could always go for a walk," says Martin, but just then along comes Danny with his mother Rita, pulling a big bag of washing. They live a little way down the road and Danny and Jenny often play together.

So instead of going for a walk, they sit and talk.



Danny and Jenny take turns to push each other round in the trolleys.

"Do you want to come and play at home?" Jenny asks when it is time to go.

But Rita says Danny has to go home for lunch first. He can visit Jenny later.

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On the way home, Jenny, Martin and Eric play at being a horse-drawn cart. Jenny sits in the cart, holding on to the washing, and shouts, "Gee-up!"

And Eric and Martin gallop away with their arms around each other. They have trouble because they keep tripping over each other.





Nearly opposite their house lives a woman called Mrs Andrews. As they come charging along the pavement, Mrs Andrews suddenly steps out of her gateway and Eric and Martin run straight into her, nearly knocking her flat.



They can't help laughing. Eric tries to say he is sorry, but he can hardly speak, he is laughing so much.

Mrs Andrews is furious. Jenny is rather frightened of Mrs Andrews because she always gives them such an angry look whenever they meet her.

"What on earth do you think you are playing at?" she hisses. "Can't we even

walk peacefully on the pavement any more?"

"Yes, we are very sorry," says Martin.

"Sorry! You gays! Why don't you stay at home so the rest of us don't have to see you? Ugh!" Mrs Andrews turns on her heel and marches off angrily down the street.

"She certainly was upset," Eric grins. "Well, it was an accident."



Jenny is terrified. "Why did she shout like that? She is stupid. It isn't up to her to say whether we can walk down the street, is it?"

"No," says Eric, putting Jenny down. "It isn't up to her. I expect it was

because she was frightened. People often shout and say all sorts of things they probably don't mean when they are frightened. Never mind!"

They all help to get the cart up the steps and into the yard.







Eric starts to hang out the clothes. "Are you going to play for a bit in the sandpit?" he asks.

But Jenny doesn't feel like playing.

"Why did she say that about gays?" she asks. "What does that mean?"

"We call it that when two men love each other and live together like Martin and I do," says Eric, taking the clothes-peg out of his mouth. "There are some

people who can't understand it. They think it is strange for two men to live together, because it isn't very common. Perhaps someone has told them it is wrong. So they get scared or angry. It is often like that when people can't understand something."

"But can't you just tell her about it, so she doesn't have to get so cross?" says Jenny.

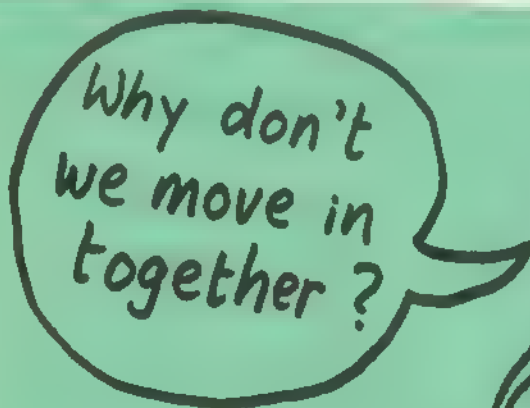
"It isn't always so easy, just going up to people and trying to explain something to them. And if you don't know them, you can't be at all sure they will believe what you say. Run in and get a piece of chalk and I will draw you a story."

Jenny rushes in to find a piece of chalk. It is always fun when Martin or Eric draws a story on the stones in the yard.

She comes back with the chalk and sits down with Martin, and Eric draws pictures and tells the story.



Here are Bill and Fred





Here comes grumpy Mrs Jones



Here comes Mrs Jones' husband, Mr Jones



Now that is not quite right dear. When I was young I was in love with a man and we lived together. But then I met you- and it was you I loved most. And you loved me most. So we moved in together and got married

But goodness! Why didn't you ever tell me that? I always thought it was wrong when two men love each other



There are so many things people think are wrong. It can never be wrong to live with someone you are fond of



"Can you see why she was angry thinking it was wrong for Bill and Fred to love each other?" Eric asks

Jenny thinks about it for a little while "Mmm But her husband said it wasn't wrong and then she told them she was sorry "

"Yes, she was only angry because she didn't know anything about it. Perhaps it was the first time she had heard of two men wanting to live together. It is the same with Mrs. Andrews. If she knew a bit more about gay people, she wouldn't have said anything so stupid to us, even if she was upset "



A short time later the doorbell rings. It is Danny come to play.

Jenny tells him the story about Bill and Fred, and she also tells him how they ran into Mrs Andrews and she lost her temper and said all sorts of things.

"It is only because she doesn't know anything about it," says Jenny. "But I don't like her being so grumpy. I get scared when I meet her."

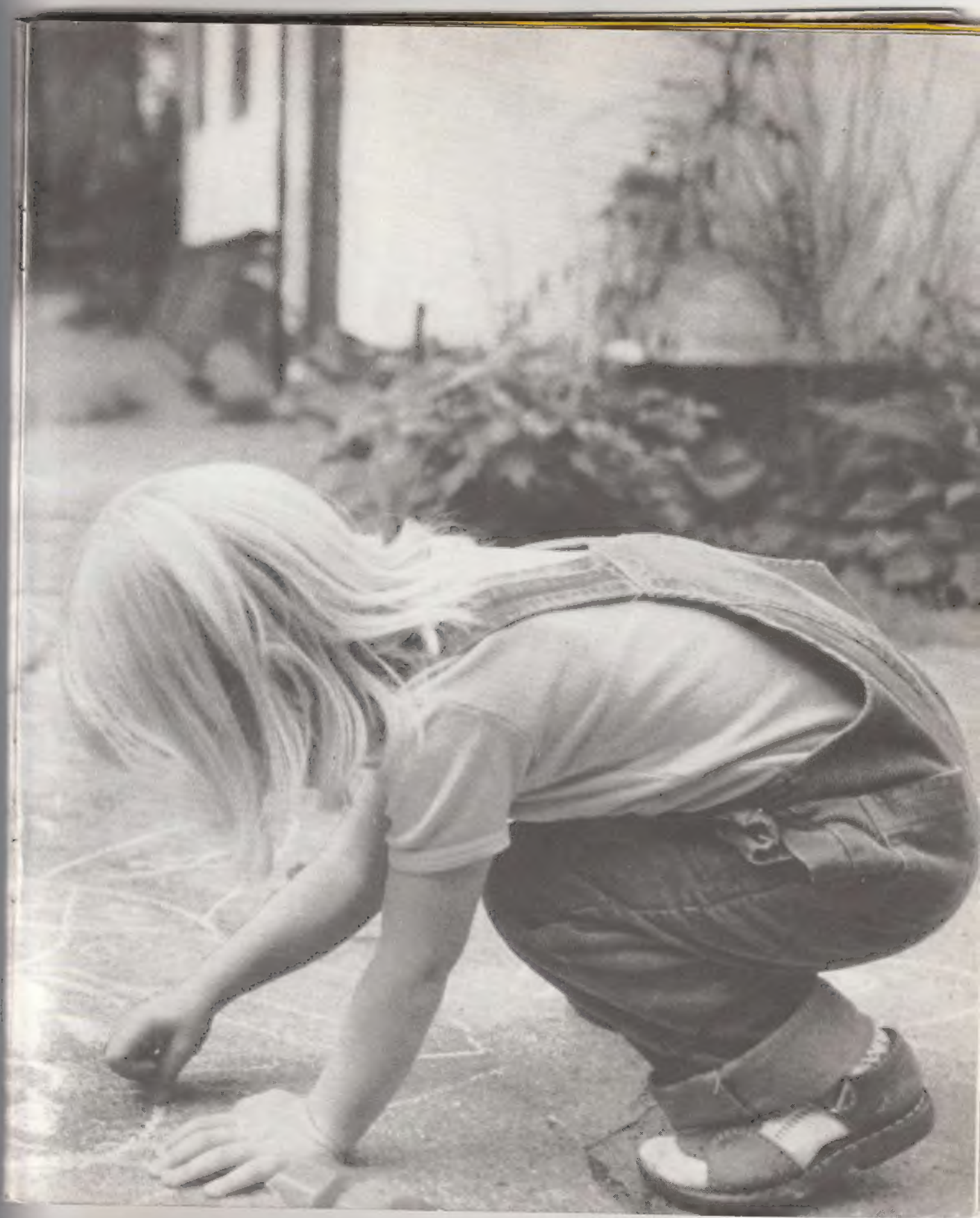
"My mum knows Mrs Andrews well," says Danny. "Perhaps she can talk to her so she won't be so grumpy."

They play for the rest of the afternoon, drawing new pictures and stories.

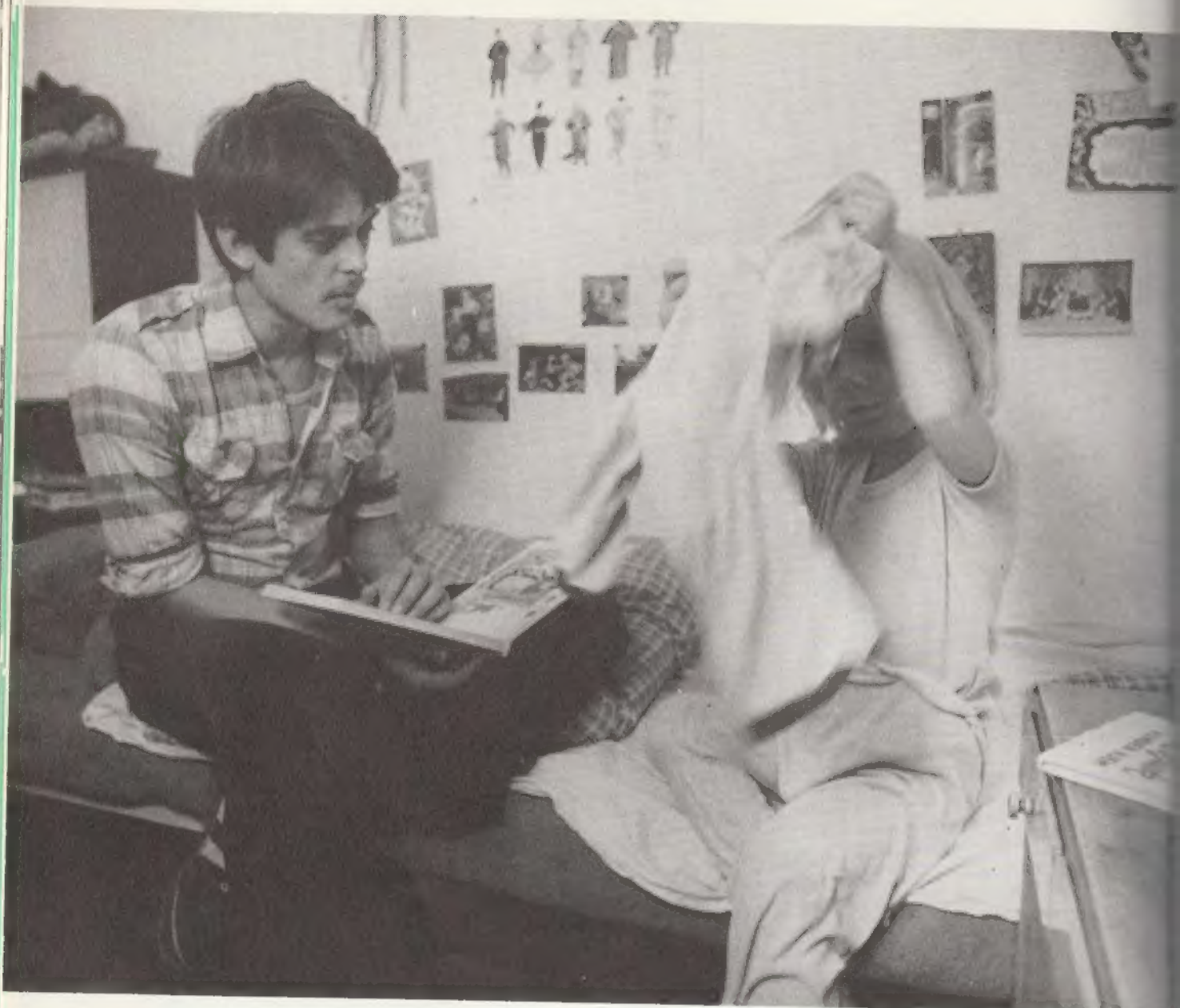
In the end the whole yard is covered with pictures – it looks great.

Martin comes out and says that it is late and Danny has to go home for tea. He can come again tomorrow.









Later, while Jenny is getting ready for bed, she thinks again about what Mrs Andrews said about gays.

"Do you think Mrs Andrews will stop being so grumpy if Danny's mum talks to her?"

"I should think so," says Eric. "If she doesn't, it will be a pity – more for her than for anyone else."





Jenny thinks it over as she pulls on her pyjamas.

"Can you and Dad have babies?" she asks.

"No, you silly," says Eric, grinning. "We can love each other in the same ways as anyone else, but we can't have babies. Only women and men can have babies together. You know that."

"So it is lucky you have me," says Jenny.

Eric thinks so too.

